

PEPPERGRASS (*Lepidium virginicum*)

FLOWERS: February - November

DESCRIPTION: Branching stems with flowering tips that grow, leaving seedpods on stem. Leaves are toothed. Mustard Family.

HABITAT: Fields, pastures, prairies, yards, roadsides, railroads

LOCATION: Scattered state-wide

COLLECTION: February - November

USES: Salad, potherb, soup



There is little reason to question the name of this plant after eating it. It has a hot, peppery twist I find appealing.

My front yard supports this plant and allows it to be a regular on our dinner table. I use the peppergrass leaves, stems, flowers, seedpods and all in a green salad to be eaten raw, or wilted with a leaf lettuce. Although I prefer peppergrass uncooked, it may be added to the greens pot.

The seed pods are also good sprinkled on soups or used in a vinegar-oil salad dressing. In the fall, the dried peppergrass stems and pods can be easily gathered. (They enter the aesthetic area and make an attractive addition to a dried arrangement.) By running your fingers down the stem, both seeds and pods pop off into a box. These reddish seeds can be obtained by winnowing the pods out. Now, I have stated the dried peppergrass is easy to pick. Let me assure you that does not go for the winnowing process. This is a very slow, time-consuming process when done by hand. I spent two hours getting a little more than enough to fill the space of a quarter. Nonetheless, the seed is worthy of some effort. One gentleman suggested I check a mill about sorting out the seeds. I'll remember that. Only wish I'd thought of it earlier!



SHEPHERD'S PURSE (*Capsella Bursa-pastoris*)

FLOWERS: January - December

DESCRIPTION: Rosette structure of leaves has a single stem, flowering at tip and leaving seed-pods on stems as tip grows. Mustard Family.

HABITAT: Fields, pastures, lawns, roadside, rail-roads

LOCATED: Statewide

COLLECTION: Leaves, February - April; Seeds, June - September

USES: Salad, potherb, vegetable, breadstuff

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Shepherd's purse differs from peppergrass in the branching and pod structure. Shepherd's purse has heart-shaped or old-fashioned shepherd's purse pods while the peppergrass pod is more round. Peppergrass has several branches off the central stem while shepherd's purse sends a single stem up from its rosette. The two are, however, interchangeable in preparations.

The young leaves, flowers, and seeds may be wilted, made into slaw or used in a tossed salad. The peppery twang of the green leaves has given it another name of "salt and pepper."

Shepherd's purse may be boiled as a potherb or tossed in a bacon grease, crumbs, vinegar and water solution and simmered.

The seeds of this plant were gathered by Indians and ground into a meal for breads.

It is reputed to be an excellent check against internal hemorrhaging and hemorrhoids. For this medicinal tea, stir a large teaspoon of leaves in a cup of boiling water for half an hour. Drink cold, two or more cups a day. Good? Oh, well, it's good for you!

WATER CRESS (*Nasturtium officinale*)

FLOWERS: April - October

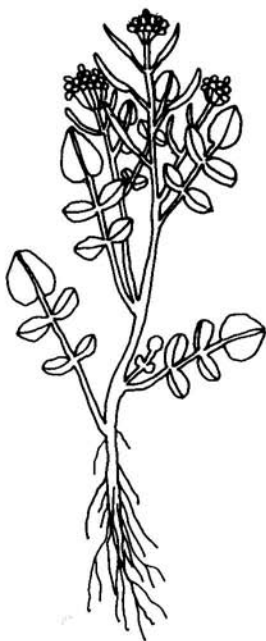
DESCRIPTION: Branched, bushy. Thick, juicy stem, tiny white flower cluster (flat) on stem end. Leaves opposite and divided. Mustard Family.

HABITAT: Springs and spring-fed streams

16 LOCATION: Southern and central Missouri

COLLECTION: January - December

USES: Salad, soup



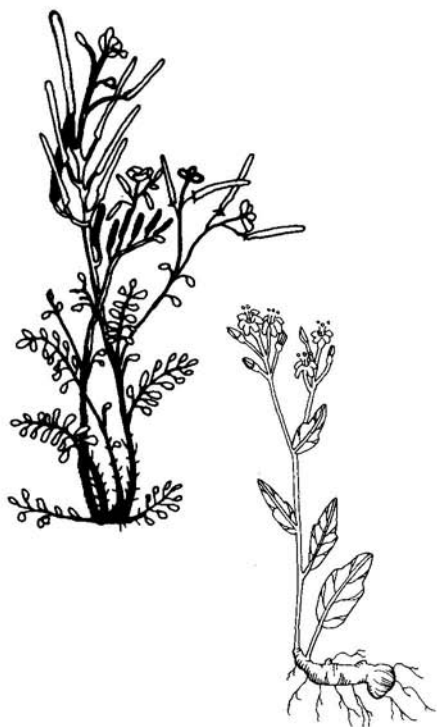
Water cress is a delicacy to be sure. Fond memories of wilted water cress, which came from a nearby spring, are part of my growing up. My mother would fry two strips of bacon, crumble them over the water cress and wilt the mess by bringing to a boil equal amounts of bacon grease, vinegar and water. She added 1 T sugar and a dash of salt to the boiling mixture and poured it immediately over the fresh greens.

These are fascinating stories of the effects of water cress ranging from the ability to expel worms, kill the unborn child, act as an aphrodisiac, or good for a deranged mind. I tend to agree with the last effect as I'm sure that anyone eating water cress has a more pleasant outlook just commenting on how good it is.

Some cautions are worth mentioning when picking water cress. If there is question that the water in which it grows might be contaminated, it is advisable to soak the cress in water with a water-purifying tablet. Also, be sure you can recognize poisonous water hemlock and avoid that plant in your picking.

As avid canoe floating enthusiasts, we often pick a small handful of water cress to have with our "camp salad" that evening. It adds a peppery zing to the meal.

Water cress can be used raw in salads or sandwiches, or it can be cooked as a potherb. I do not recommend the latter. Angier gives a great soup recipe for water cress. Add 1 cup chopped water cress to 3 cups milk which has been heated with $1\frac{1}{2}$ t salt. Simmer for five minutes. Beat at last minute before you serve and add another cup of milk or cream which is allowed to heat. Top with a dash of paprika and a sprig of cress. Also good when $\frac{1}{2}$ cup is added to your regular scrambled eggs.



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BITTER CRESS (*Cardamine pennsylvanica*, *C. parviflora*)

SPRING CRESS (*Cardamine bulbosa*)

FLOWERS: March - June

DESCRIPTION: Basal leaves, alternate on smooth stem. Small, 4 petal, flower. Mustard Family.

HABITAT: Wet woodland, wet meadows, around springs, moist ledges

LOCATION: Southern and central Missouri

COLLECTION: March - June

USES: Salad, horseradish substitute

These cress plants add another flavor tingle to your wild salad bowl. The spring cress has a hint of horseradish, but both are welcome and interesting as edible wildings.

I generally use a vinegar-oil salad dressing for my wild salads, but any dressing of your choice is suitable.

The bulb-like base of the spring cress stem may be grated, mixed with vinegar and used as a substitute for horseradish.

GOOSEBERRY (*Ribes missouriense*)

FLOWERS: April - May

DESCRIPTION: Simple, palmate leaf, irregular toothed. Woody stems with spines. Flowers dangle downward. Saxifrage Family.

HABITAT: Rocky or open dry woods, thickets

LOCATION: Statewide, except southeast

COLLECTION: Leaves, March - May; Fruit, June - September

USES: Fruit, pie, cobbler, jelly, tea



Just mention gooseberries to me and the saliva begins to flow. This is due to the fact that I love the sour, tart berry and am enthusiastic about all of the products made from it. To enjoy a gooseberry while it is green, one must hold the berry in the mouth, slowly breaking it open and allowing adequate saliva to accumulate and dilute the sour flavor.

The puckery berry, for my taste, is best when picked still green. The gooseberry hangs on a stem which generally pulls off with the berry. A hairy beard or whiskers remains on the flowering end of the berry. Both stems and whiskers must be plucked off before using in pies or cobblers. One must truly work for his supper if gooseberry pie is on the menu. Although time consuming, the result is *par-excellence!* After stems and whiskers are removed, put washed berries in a pie shell. Add $1\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ t salt, $1\frac{1}{2}$ T flour, 1 T oleo, and top with the upper crust. Bake at 400 degrees for 45 minutes to an hour, or until golden brown.

The ripe reddish or purple berry does not have the tangy tartness and is preferred by some in the pie. If ripe berries are used, add only $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of sugar.

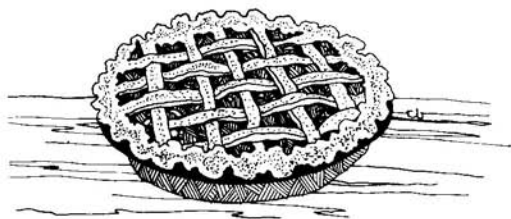
The delicate, pink colored jelly made from the green gooseberry is ambrosial food on hot breads. Gooseberry jam is equally good. My mother kills two birds with one stone when making both jelly and jam. She covers the berries with water and cooks for ten minutes or so. Then she pours off most, but not all, of the juice liquid. This is made into jelly by returning it to the heat, adding a small amount of Sure-Jell and a cup of sugar per cup of liquid. The remainder of the juice and berries was run through a colander to get as much of the pulp as possible. Again measure cup for cup with sugar, but add no Sure-Jell in jam. When the liquid slithers off the spoon and begins to gel, pour into sterilized jars and seal.

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Gooseberry leaves may be used raw in a tossed salad or slaw. The young dried leaves may be used for making tea. Pick the young leaves and allow three months to dry. A tea is made by adding 1 t crushed gooseberry leaves to one cup of hot water and allowing it to steep for several minutes.

Another name for this fruit is feverberry, so called because it is said to help break a fever by crushing 1 t of the berries and adding that to a cup of hot water.

Whatever the name — feverberry, current, or gooseberry — it's not great, it's FANTASTIC!!!!



**SHADBUSH, SERVICE
BERRY, JUNE BERRY**
(*Amelanchier arborea*)

FLOWERS: March - May

DESCRIPTION: Small tree,
white blossoms appear
before leaves. Leaf is
oval and toothed. Rose
Family.

HABITAT: Rocky, open
woods, steep wooded
slopes and bluffs

20 LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: June - July

USES: Raw, jelly, pies



I include a page on this tree simply to point out a valuable lesson I learned the hard way. The first spring I photographed the beautiful flowers of the March-blooming shadbush, I vowed to return for a sample of the promised fruits in June. I had read that the berries turn from a red to a purple wine-color when ripe. Although I thought I knew where the trees were located, I couldn't find any of them. In the spring, the shadbush blooms before any of its leaves are out and very few of the other trees have leafed out. The berries occur during peak foliage, which enables the tree to be easily hidden and causes confusion in locating. I missed a whole year because I had not carefully pinpointed my shadbush's location. Do so! The raw berries are rather bland, but make a good jelly. It takes a lot of berries to make a pie. I suggest a pie made in an old pot pie pan.

Steyermark tells of preparing the fruits into a paste and drying it. Try the recipe for Persimmon Leather in this book (page 40). The Indians mixed the dried leather with corn meal for a bread.

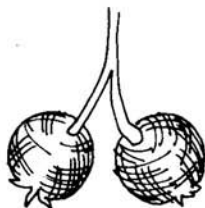


HAWTHORN (*Crataegus* ...
various species)

FAMILY: Rose. Steyermark
lists 50 species; see him
for location, descrip-
tion.

COLLECTION: August -
September

USES: Jelly, butter



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The hard, small fruits of Missouri's state flower, the hawthorn, are very hard to cut open. They are $\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter and leave a golden stain on the fingers.

My first attempt to make jelly was unsuccessful. I eliminated the Sure-Jell, feeling that the hawthorn was like the apple with plenty of pectin. Whether it does or not I know not, but the jelly took a long boiling period to become akin to taffy candy. For my next batch I used pectin and got a beautiful golden-colored jelly.

I experimented with two Hawthorn Butter recipes. Although my preference is the second recipe, both are good. Cook the fruits and mash through a colander to get the pulp. To make Molasses Hawthorn Butter, put these ingredients in a large dutch oven or saucepan: 2 cups of hawthorn pulp, 2 cups sugar, $\frac{3}{4}$ t cinnamon, $\frac{1}{4}$ t cloves, juice $\frac{1}{3}$ lemon, 2 T molasses. Boil slowly until the mixture bubbles and pops, as well as slithers off the spoon; pour into sterilized jars.

Wine Hawthorn Butter is made by the same procedure above using these measurements and ingredients: $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups hawthorn pulp, 3 cups sugar, 1 t cinnamon, $\frac{1}{4}$ t cloves, dash allspice, $\frac{1}{3}$ lemon, and $\frac{1}{3}$ cup Rhine wine. Serve with cattail or reindeer lichen biscuit.

STRAWBERRY (*Fragaria virginiana* and *F. vesca*)

FLOWERS: April - May

DESCRIPTION: Three-part leaflets, sawtoothed.
Rose Family.

HABITAT: Wooded slopes
along streams, open
slopes, prairie, railroads

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: May - June

USES: Berry, jam, shortcake
topping, tea



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A hiker's delight is to walk into a wild strawberry patch! A field nibble is both thirst quenching and taste-bud arousing. Sometimes sweet, sometimes tart, the wild strawberry is always good. An even greater thrill is to locate a patch big enough to provide a wild strawberry shortcake or tarts and still have enough to make jam!!!

The wild strawberry ranges from the size of a pea to thumb-size. With both size and quantity often small, I frequently make the small quarter-sized tarts out of my favorite pie crust recipe and place a tablespoon of berries which have been stemmed and sugared in the tart. This I call Again Strawberry Tart. You'll want it again and again.

In August when the leaves begin to dry, pick them for a tea. The leaves may also be picked in the spring and dried. The leaves are a high source of vitamin C and were welcomed in the spring by the settlers. The dried leaves require 1 t per cup for a tea, and a fresh cup requires 4-5 fresh leaves. Let them steep for 3-5 minutes.

A good recipe for jam is to place equal amounts of crushed berries and sugar in a sauce pan. Cook over medium heat, stirring frequently, until the sugar melts. Boil rapidly for 10 to 15 minutes or until mixture begins to thicken. It is not recommended to fix quantities larger than four cups in one batch. Success will be more likely by making two batches of three or four cup quantities.

All in all, this wilding goes the same places her larger domestic cousin goes.

For an even greater tart or shortcake, top with whipped cream or ice cream — from a wild cow, of course!!



RASPBERRY (*Rubus occidentalis*)

FLOWERS: April - June

DESCRIPTION: Three coarsely toothed leaflets, bottom whitish. Stems whitish (rubs off), purple canes, stickers.

HABITAT: Edge of woods, fields, roadsides, thickets

LOCATION: Statewide except lower southeast Missouri

COLLECTION: June - July

USES: Jam, jelly, berry, pie, syrup, tea

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The purplish-white canes of the raspberry are an instantly recognizable friend in the spring. As the young shoots are forming, the peeled sprouts make a field nibble for a hungry hiker.

The berry ripens in June and is much the same color as the blackberry, as this is the black raspberry. The fruits turn from green to white to red to a purple-black.

It is tough to find a better berry to enjoy fresh with cream and sugar or as a topping with your cereal. It makes a superb pie by adding fresh berries to a pie crust, cover with sugar, add a dash of salt, 2 T flour and a dab of butter. Top with another crust and bake at 400 degrees with a tantalizing aroma as an accompaniment.

The jelly and jam made from the raspberry are praised highly. Cover the berries with water, simmer 10-15 minutes, drain off most of the liquid for jelly. Use a cup of sugar per cup of raspberry juice. Again, it is best to cook no more than three or four cups in any one batch. For each batch, use a package of Sure-Jell (or any pectin additive). Boil this in a large pan as it foams high and can easily spill

over. The remaining juice and berries should be run through the colander for jam. Add equal amounts of sugar but add no pectin in jams. When the mixture has boiled until it slithers off the spoon, pour into sterilized jars and seal.

A delicious syrup can be made as if you were preparing to make jelly. You do not add pectin nor do you cook as long as jelly. The syrup is heavenly on a batch of cattail pollen pancakes, or just plain ones for that matter!

The young leaves of raspberry, when dried, make a tea substitute that is especially good when mixed with dried orange peel or lemon peel. Fernald and Kinsey did state that one might be cautious of the fresh tea as the tea made from fresh leaves might be harmful. I decided not to try it! Dried leaves are good. Add 1 t
24 crushed leaves to a cup of water that is boiling and steep for 3-5 minutes.

A wine may be made by crushing the berries and straining into a crock. Add a pound of powdered sugar per quart and stir occasionally for the next three days. The settled liquid is siphoned off and added to two parts sherry. It is ready in about two weeks, the *New England Farmer* claims. However it doesn't taste bad immediately, and a year later it is even better!

A tasty liqueur is made by filling a bottle half full of raspberries. Add one cup sugar dissolved with a small amount of water. Fill with a good whiskey and allow this to be forgotten for 3-6 months. Strain off the liquid and bottle.

The young raspberry shoots can be cut and eaten, making a good field nibble.



BLACKBERRY (*Rubus pensilvanicus* and several other species)

FLOWERS: April - June

DESCRIPTION: Star-shaped, ridged stems erect from ground. Leaves in threes, stem thorny, berries white, red, then blackish when ripe. Rose Family.

HABITAT: Fencerows, roadsides, hillsides, thickets, meadows, pastures, prairies

LOCATION: Scattered statewide

COLLECTION: Leaves, April - May; Berries, July - August

USES: Pies, berry, cobbler, jelly, jam, drink, liqueur, tea

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I look forward to blackberry picking every year despite the fact that one must conquer briers and chiggers in exchange for the delicious berries entwined. I try to locate ripe berries after July 4th and can sometimes pick as late as August. When picking blackberries, long sleeves and blue jeans are *musts* to ward off the briers. My husband is convinced that chiggers and blackberries are interchangeable words. Consequently, a good dusting of bug spray is recommended before you begin to pick. Our two daughters are good berry pickers and provide several pies for us each year.

Before raving over the cooked wonders of these berries, let me assure you that the raw fruit is scrumptious. A perfect way to start the day is to serve blackberries on a morning cereal, or plain with cream and sugar. They are equally delicious when served with ice cream, in a milk shake or in a fruit salad.

I believe it is impossible to serve blackberries in a way that I would not like. Our favorite, however, is a hot and bubbling blackberry pie served with a scoop of ice cream. For a pie, fix your pastry in the pie pan. Wash the berries and fill the crust almost to the top. Cover the berries with sugar, then sprinkle a tablespoon of flour over the top along with a small amount of salt. Drop several butter pats on the top and cover with another crust. I recommend baking the pie on a cookie sheet to protect the oven, because the pie often bubbles over. Bake at 350 degrees for almost an hour. The first bite is delicious and every bite thereafter improves!!!

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Blackberry jelly is another must on the wild list. To make jelly, cover the bottom of a Dutch oven or large saucepan with an inch of berries and put water over them. Let this simmer at a slow boil for ten minutes or so and pour off the liquid. A good rule of thumb when making jelly is to cook no more than four cups of jelly at a time since the mixture boils and foams up during the cooking process. Measure the liquid and add a package of pectin per four cups of liquid. When the juice begins to show signs of boiling, add equal cups of sugar per cups of juice. This will boil and start to thicken. One jelly test is to let a spoonful of jelly flow off your spoon back into the pot. When the last drops begin to collect before falling off and sort of slither off the spoon, the jelly is ready to pour into sterilized jars. Another test is to drop a dab onto a saucer. If it hardens and doesn't run, the jelly is ready. I usually let the jelly set for a while and spoon the whitish scum off the top before putting into the jars.

When making jelly, save some of the juice for syrup. Boil equal parts of blackberry juice and sugar. Do not add the pectin when syrup is your goal. When the juice and sugar begins to thicken, pour into a jar for pancakes.

Jam made from these blessed berries is fit for gods. I often use my Mother's double trick. Fix the berries for jelly, pour off most of the liquid, but leave some of the juice. To make jam, put all of the berries and the small amount of juice in the colander to get out as much pulp as possible. Return the pulp and juice to the stove with equal amounts of sugar. Pectin is never used in jam. It takes a little longer for the mixture to thicken, but when it does you have a treat.

A blackberry liqueur worth fussing over is easily fixed. Put blackberries in the bottom half of a bottle and add raw or granulated sugar that has been mixed with a small amount of water. Cover all of this, filling the remainder of the bottle with a good whiskey. Allow it to set for at least three months. Strain out all liquid and pour into a dark bottle.

In early spring before and during the flowering stage, the young leaves may be picked and made into a tea. I prefer to dry the leaves thoroughly and save for winter. To serve, put a scant teaspoon of crushed leaves in a cup of boiling water and allow it to steep for three or four minutes before straining out the leaves. Sweeten with honey or sugar.

I've been toying with drying the fruits to use in muffins, pancakes, cakes, etc. This would make a neat treat to take backpacking. My experiments have been successful, although they are very seedy. I've dried the berries both on a screen and in my oven. I left them in the attic on an old window screen for a couple of months. To dry in the oven, place the berries one layer deep on a cookie sheet and leave in a slow oven, 200 degrees, for two days and nights. The dried berries are not very tasty, as is the raisin, but if I were to have to survive on my own means for a long period of time, it would be worthwhile.

There are many recipes for the use of blackberries in puddings, cakes, cobblers and the like. Any good cookbook will offer you a variety of ways in which you might prepare these small yummys. I've managed to try several of these varieties, but find the pie so much more to my family's liking that other baked goods seem to be a waste of the blackberry.

Part of the fun in picking blackberries is that you eat one raw berry for every two or three that makes its way into your bucket. Blackberry stains the fingers rather badly and makes tattletale evidence on the mouth as well. I have often used old, soft socks on my hands when picking. These are a bit like a mitten, but large enough to allow the fingers to move and pick easily.

Regardless of the hardships in picking, the pies from these berries are like the gold medal for the marathon ... the endurance and physical tearing are forgotten with the victory and the prize!!!